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Carter Agrees to Disclosure of Spy Budget

But Only the Total—
No CIA Figure—and
Congress Must Decide

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WASHINGTON—Breaking with tradition and worldwide practice, the Carter Administration reluctantly agreed Wednesday to let Congress, if it so wishes, disclose the total annual cost of U.S. intelligence activities.

But Adm. Stansfield Turner, the new director of the CIA, said that to make public the budgets of individual agencies, such as the CIA, would do irreparable harm to national security.

Three of Turner's predecessors—George Bush, William E. Colby and Richard Helms—counseled against releasing even overall intelligence figures. Taking that unprecedented step, they said, would only increase pressure to disclose cost breakdowns.

These and other views were presented at a day-long hearing by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which has been directed by the Senate to recommend by July 1 whether the nation's intelligence budget should be made public.

Sen. William D. Hathaway (D-Me.), chairman of the committee's budget subcommittee, said after the hearing that the committee might vote as early as today on its recommendation. The final determination will be up to the full Senate by roll call vote.

No overall figures were mentioned Wednesday but estimates of annual U.S. intelligence costs have ranked as high as \$10 billion.

Turner, the first witness, said that releasing even total costs would entail risks.

"There is a risk in every disclosure but all of us feel the responsibility to be as open with the country as possible, so the need warrants the risk being taken," Turner testified.

"Accordingly," he said, "President Carter has directed that I not object to your releasing to the public the single overall budget figure of the U.S. intelligence community."

Under questioning, Turner made clear that the Administration would not take that step on its own initiative, that it would have to be a decision by the Senate.

Turner, who at times declined to furnish specific information in a public forum, drew a sharp line against disclosing anything beyond a total figure.

"The detailed intelligence budget in the hands of our enemies would be a powerful weapon which would make our collection effort more difficult, more hazardous to life and much more costly," he said. "The way we spend our intelligence money in this country is one of our necessary secrets."

Turner said that no other nation in the world, Communist or non-Communist, makes public any of its intelligence costs. In Great Britain, he said, even the name of the intelligence director is kept secret.

Opinion within the Senate commit-

tee appeared to be sharply divided on whether the total intelligence figure should be disclosed.

"I wouldn't even disclose one figure," said Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), the committee's ranking Republican. "There are certain things the people and Congress don't have to know."

Hathaway, Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) and Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) also expressed skepticism about the wisdom of releasing any intelligence costs.

Other senators questioned how keeping intelligence budgets secret could be justified under the Constitution. Article I, Sec. 9, says:

"No money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in consequence of appropriations made by law, and a regular statement and account of the receipts and expenditures of all public money shall be published from time to time."

Turner said that the CIA's general counsel had advised him that two court rulings had left to Congress the final determination on whether intelligence costs should be disclosed. Congress thus far has refused to make the figures public.

Sen. Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.), who said he favored releasing aggregate intelligence figures, asked whether other details could be disclosed that would "not betray any secrets."

"I think the risk would be substantially high," Turner responded. "In closed session, I could give you examples of what could be deduced (by other nations)."

Bush, Turner's immediate predecessor, said in a written statement that annual disclosures of intelligence spending would allow foreign experts to make key judgments about U.S. operations. "I worry about the whittling-away process that might take place," he said.